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In a victory for the integrity of science education in Texas, the Texas state board of education approved a revision to the state science standards that removed language that opened the door to creationism.

Kathy Miller, the president of the Texas Freedom Network, [commented](#) [4], "The politicians on the state board have finally listened to scientists and classroom professionals who know what students need to get a 21st-century education."

At issue were four standards inserted into the Texas state science standards by members of the state board of education, without input from scientists and educators, during the last revision of the standards in 2009.

The objectionable standards called for students to analyze "all sides of scientific evidence" and to evaluate "sudden appearance, stasis" in the fossil record, "the complexity of the cell," and "the DNA molecule for self-replicating life."

The history as well as the pedagogical and scientific problems of these standards is [described](#) [5] (PDF) in detail by Ryan Valentine of the Texas Freedom Network, Ben Pierce of Southwestern University, and John Wise of Southern Methodist University in a 2015 report.

A panel of educators and scientists charged with streamlining the science standards for biology

recommended the removal of the standards on the grounds that they raised issues too difficult for teachers to present and students to understand.

On February 1, 2017, the board considered the panel's recommendations about the four standards, voting to remove the "all sides of evidence" standard — the successor to Texas's notorious "strengths and weaknesses" standard.

Although the board decided not to remove the fossil record standard as recommended by the panel, it accepted a version of the standard that the panel suggested as a possible alternative not as problematic as the original.

And the board voted to retain the complexity standard and the DNA standard, revised to require students to "evaluate" scientific explanations of the origin of DNA and the complexity of prokaryotic and eukaryotic cells.

The February votes were only preliminary, however. At the board's April 18, 2017, meeting, as the *Houston Chronicle* (April 19, 2017) [reported](#) [6], the panel recommended slightly but importantly different versions of the complexity and DNA standards.

Ron Wetherington of Southern Methodist University, a member of the panel, explained that words like "evaluate" are seen as invitations by ideologues "to explore creationism and intelligent design as explanations for the origin of life," in the *Chronicle's* words.

In a preliminary vote on April 18, 2017, the board voted unanimously to accept the panel's proposed revisions, particularly the substitution of "examine" for "evaluate" in the complexity and DNA standards. The decision was clinched by a final vote on April 21, 2017.

Welcoming the vote via Twitter, the Texas Freedom Network [summed up](#) [7] the situation: "SBOE votes & for the 1st time in 30 years, standards are free of junk science designed to cast doubt on evolution. No, for real!"

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